

CENTERVILLE

Civic band formed around 1900

► The forerunner of today's group practiced on the second floor of a blacksmith's shop.

Part of many towns' civic pride is the appearance of a community band in concerts, parades and other special events.

Centerville and its environs had such a band in the early 1900s. Its "oompah-pah" was a vital ingredient in the activities surrounding such holidays as Memorial Day and the Fourth of July. It was a forerunner of today's Centerville Community Band.

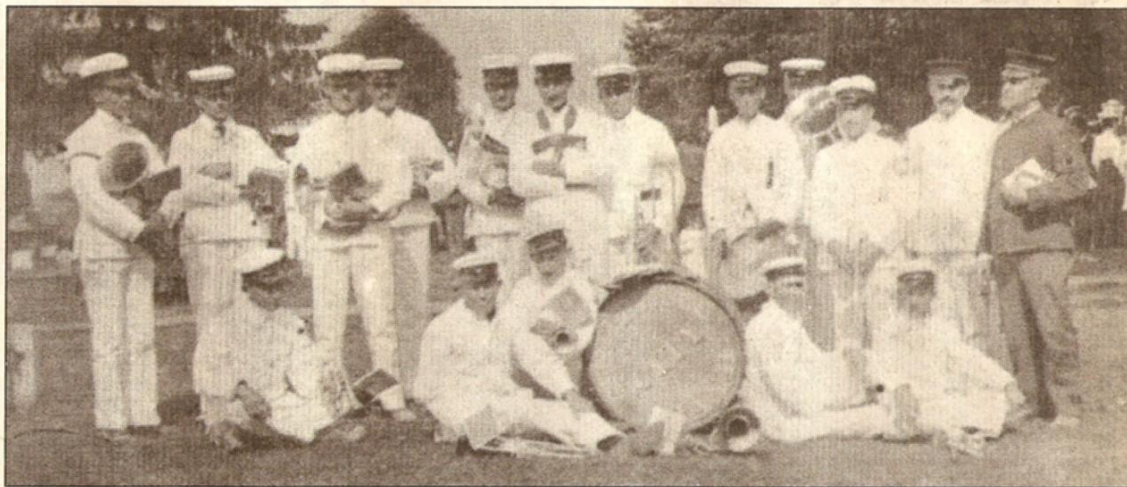
"The 16 or 17 members practiced on the second floor of old Joseph Kindle's blacksmith shop on South Main Street, where Friendly's restaurant is now," said Celia Elliott, who edited *Once Upon a Town and Township*, an 80-page softbound book published by the Centerville-Washington Twp. Historical Society in 1971. "My uncle, Clifford Himes, was a member."

In the 1930s before World War II, Clark Haines, 85, who could be called the musician emeritus of the Dayton area, remembers the Centerville Civic Band that played at political rallies and on Saturday night in the summer on a flat bed truck in the center of town.

"They would string light bulbs around the truck to make it look like a stage," Haines said. "Once we played in Miamisburg and they gave us miner caps to wear. With the light from the caps, we could read the music."

That band practiced in the Old Knights of Pythias Hall, which currently houses Sweeney's Restaurant on West Franklin Street.

"When we marched in a parade from Centerville to Bellbrook and back, that was a hilly challenge," Haines recalled. "Clyde Long, who had a farm on what is now Whipp Road, always treated the band members to sandwiches and soft drinks following the parade."



The Centerville Civic Band in 1908 was directed by Charles Long, far right. Here, the group played for Memorial Day services at the Centerville cemetery.



The Centerville Community Band performs at a variety of community events, such as its participation in the 1996 Kettering Holiday at Home parade.

It wasn't until 1985 that Centerville again had a community band.

"I was watching the Kettering Holiday at Home parade with its fine civic band, and thought how great it would be if I could play my French horn again," Anita Looper of Centerville said.

"Wayne Markworth, the Centerville High School band director, thought it would be a good idea and he offered to be the director."

After the first organizational year, because of his heavy schedule, Markworth turned the fledgling community band over to a former student, Diana Wightman. When she left to accept a

school band position, Wilbur Cline, retired Bellbrook High School band director, took over. He was succeeded by Robert Johnson, retired band director in the Dayton schools.

For the past three years, the Centerville Community Band has been directed by Darin Jolliffe-Haas, a private instrumental teacher.

Gary Kuntz, civic band president, said there are currently about 55 members, but with work and family obligations, that number can fluctuate.

"We welcome new members and auditions are not required. Our music ranges from marches

to Broadway tunes," Kuntz said.

Noting the picture of the 1908 city band, Looper observed that there were no women in the group. "We have many women like myself who played in high school and college bands and want to keep playing. It's fun and we meet every Tuesday from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Centerville High School Band Room."

The Centerville Community Band will play in concert at 5 p.m. March 15 at Southminster Presbyterian Church, 7001 Far Hills Ave. The band will perform April 17 at the Hithergreen Senior Center for members and their guests at its chili supper.

At 3 p.m. May 3, the band will appear at Normandy United Methodist Church, 450 W. Alexandersville-Bellbrook Road, in concert. And as it has done for the last 10 years, the band will play in the afternoon at the Cox Arboretum MetroPark's annual Mothers Day Plant Sale on May 10.

For readers of "Now and Then" this is the 75th column that has appeared in the south-area editions of *Neighbors* since being introduced June 29, 1994. Keep those good reminiscences coming. Call Adele U. Koehnen at 438-1552 or write to Now and Then, *Neighbors*, Dayton Daily News, 4 S. Ludlow St., Dayton, 45402.